

In this week's *Parashah*, we read of the first instance of someone transgressing the laws of *Shabbat*. According to one opinion among the Sages, that man's sin was carrying in the public domain (where there was no *Eruv*).

Why is carrying prohibited on *Shabbat*? Indeed, what is the idea underlying the 39 prohibited categories of *Melachah* / "work"? *Dayan* Isidor Grunfeld z"l (1900-1975; London, England) explains as follows based on the teachings of R' Samson Raphael Hirsch z"l (1808-1888; Germany):

The 39 categories of *Melachah* form a cross-section of all the main types of human productive activity. Through these activities, man is engaged in a constant struggle to gain mastery over G-d's creation, to bring nature and the environment under man's control. While doing so, man tends to forget that the very powers he uses in his conquest of nature are derived from his Creator, in Whose service his life should be conducted.

In a world increasingly forgetful of G-d, *Yisrael* was entrusted with the task of preserving this all-important truth. G-d willed, therefore, that the Jew, while subduing and controlling his environment (as does every other human being), must recognize, and show that he recognizes, that his powers are derived from One higher than himself. He expresses this recognition by dedicating one day in every week to G-d, and by refraining on that day from every activity that signifies human power over nature and one's environment.

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Shemittah

Midrash Mechilta considers--and ultimately rejects--the possibility that *Shabbat*--the Sabbath Day--need not be observed during the *Shemittah*--the Sabbath Year. Though the *Midrash* rejects this idea, the fact that it could even be entertained hints at significant connections between *Shabbat* and *Shemittah*. In this space, we are exploring those connections.

R' Shmuel Bornsztain z"l (1855-1926; second *Sochatchover Rebbe*) writes: The obligation to refrain from work on *Shabbat* is much wider in scope than the obligation to refrain from work during the *Shemittah*. There is a well-known Talmudic expression, "Two hundred contains one hundred," but it is not true the other way around. Thus, how could one think that the lesser holiness of *Shemittah*, with its relatively few obligations, could supplant the greater holiness of *Shabbat*, with its many *Mitzvot*?

The *Sochatchover Rebbe* explains: *Shabbat* is referred to as "a taste of *Olam Ha'ba*." If we did not first experience this lowly physical world and work to purify ourselves from its negative aspects, we could never enjoy *Olam Ha'ba*. Similarly, one's ability to experience the loftiness of *Shabbat* depends on the degree to which one sheds himself of the preoccupations and worries of the workweek.

He continues: If one could imagine a situation in which there was no *Olam Ha'zeh* / "this world," there also could be no *Olam Ha'ba* / World-to-Come. Likewise, if there was no workweek, there could be no *Shabbat*. That is why the Torah mentions the six days of work in so many of the places where it mentions *Shabbat*.

In light of this, the *Sochatchover Rebbe* concludes, we can understand why one might have thought that *Shabbat* is set aside during the *Shemittah* year. Since the six days of work during the *Shemittah* year are not complete days of work--as certain agricultural labors are prohibited during the entire *Shemittah* year--one might have thought that the full spiritual benefits of *Shabbat* cannot be attained during this year. (Nevertheless, the *Midrash* concludes, the laws of *Shabbat* do apply as usual.)

(*Shem Mi'Shmuel: Vayikra* p.342)

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“Then the nations that heard of Your fame will say, ‘Because Hashem lacked the ability to bring this people to the Land that He had sworn to give them, He slaughtered them in the Wilderness.’

“And Hashem said, ‘I have forgiven because of your words.’” (14:15-16, 20)

R' Yosef Albo z"l (Spain; 1380-1444) writes: In general, there are three reasons to hope for Hashem's salvation: His kindness, His honor, and His promise. [R' Albo elaborates on each. Regarding trusting because of Hashem's honor, he writes:]

When someone regularly helps another person, he should continue to help, even if the recipient is not deserving, lest it appear that he is unable to help. That would bring dishonor to the one who did not help. Thus, we read in *Tehilim* (79:9), “Assist us, G-d of our salvation, for the sake of Your Name's glory.” We mean: You have been our salvation in the past; save us again for the sake of Your Name. We are not making this request because You owe us anything, nor because we are deserving. It is only for Your honor, so that the nations do not question Your ability to save us, as the next verse says, “Why should the nations say, ‘Where is their G-d?’”

This, continues R' Albo, was the nature of Moshe's prayer here. And, Hashem answered him, “I have forgiven because of your words”--i.e., so that My Name will not be desecrated. By the same token, Hashem continues (verse 21), “As I live--the glory of Hashem shall fill the entire world,” and *Bnei Yisrael* will be punished for this sin. (Sefer Ha'ikkarim IV 47)

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On *Shabbat*, explains R' Hirsch, we renounce every exercise of intelligent, purposeful control over natural objects and forces; we cease from every act of human power, in order to proclaim G-d as the Source of all power.

In light of this exposition, *Dayan* Grunfeld writes, one can easily see how senseless is the oft-repeated argument that it is no exertion to switch on an electric light or to write a word. Is using electricity any less a conquest of nature and the environment because it happens to be effortless?!

What of carrying, however, which requires no intelligent effort and in which no productive process is involved? *Dayan* Grunfeld explains that, while the other prohibited *Melachot* / activities relate to man's relationship with nature and his environment, carrying is the most basic form of “work” by which man interacts with human society. By refraining from carrying on *Shabbat*, we acknowledge Hashem as our Master in the sphere of human society as well. (The Sabbath, ch.2)

“Calev silenced the people toward Moshe and said, ‘We shall surely ascend and conquer it, for we can surely do it!’ But the men who had ascended with him said, ‘We cannot ascend to that people for it is too strong for us!’” (13:30-31)

How could Calev and Yehoshua, on the one hand, and their ten fellow spies, on the other hand, see things so differently? R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005; a pre-eminent figure in the *Mussar* movement) explains:

We live in a world that seems relatively secure. Most people have steady jobs, access to healthcare, a government that provides security and basic social services, etc. Even when things do not go well, most people have some type of safety net. Seemingly, then, all that most people need to worry about are catastrophes such as a war, an earthquake, or another natural disaster.

However, R' Wolbe writes, our Sages tell us that this view is mistaken. King Shlomo writes, for example (*Kohelet* 9:11), “Once more I saw under the sun that the race is not won by the swift, nor the battle by the strong, nor does bread come to the wise, riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the learned; but time and death will happen to them all.” Everything that seems certain in our life, all the things in which we place our trust--our *Emunah* / faith tells us not to rely on them.

This does not mean, continues R' Wolbe, that the Torah expects us to ignore our intellects. A person must try to understand the world around him and use his intellect to make decisions. However, he should not rely on his own decisions as the final word. His reliance should be on Hashem.

Two people can look at the same facts--one from a perspective of closeness to Hashem, and the other from a perspective of distance from Hashem--and they will see two very different things, R' Wolbe adds. This is what happened to the Spies, he explains. Calev and Yehoshua said (14:8), “If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to this Land and give it to us, a Land that flows with milk and honey.” The other spies saw the same land as a land that consumes its inhabitants and is unconquerable. Why? Calev and Yehoshua looked at the Land through a lens of closeness to Hashem, and that enabled them to place their trust in Him. The other spies were great men, but they felt slightly less *Dveikut* / attachment to Hashem than people on their level should have had. As a result, they relied on their intellects, not on Hashem, and that led them astray. (AleI Shur II p.576)



“The land through which we have passed, to spy it out, is a land which devours its inhabitants.” (13:32)

R' Meir Leibush Weiser z"l (1809-1879; Ukraine and Romania; known as “*Malbim*”) writes: The spies told the truth; they just did not understand what they had seen. The fact that *Eretz Yisrael* appeared to be devouring the Seven Nations is a sign of the Land's holiness. *Eretz Yisrael* was created for *Bnei Yisrael*, and only for *Bnei Yisrael*. (Eretz Chemdah)